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So the American people understand this. The American people understand that while we have a housing crisis, while we have a crisis in our financial markets, where we're having trouble actually making, having funds made available to make student loans, we understand that there's a connection between the economic problems we face and our involvement in Iraq.

And again, I don't think any of us would argue if this were a war where there were clearly defined goals, and if there were an existential threat to the United States, our security. But our national intelligence estimate, our 16 agencies said no, that's not the case, that we don't face an existential threat in Iraq. We are, essentially, refereeing, as we know, a sectarian dispute.

And I think what is most frustrating, again, reading between the lines, listening to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, is that there was never a mention that I heard of anything that we could do to change the outcome there; that the implication was we were just sitting there, and that we had to wait until they decided that they were going to make it okay for us to leave. And that's a very, very frustrating position to be in.

And I wish somebody, maybe somebody did ask that and I didn't hear it, but I wish that they had been asked that specific question; is there anything we can do to change the dynamics there to improve the conditions that would allow us to begin withdrawing our troops and to reduce this incredible cost to the American people?

So I would hope that as we go forward, and you hate to say, as we go forward, because we've been going forward, now, for 5 years, and the outlook is not any brighter. The prospects for resolution in Iraq are not any greater.

And unfortunately, listening to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker yesterday, I think it's, unfortunately, true that the people who are in charge don't know where we're going and most importantly, why we're going.

So these are things, as the months roll by, while the cost accumulates, and while, unfortunately, we will suffer, no doubt, as we have suffered, just in the last few days, 13 new American casualties, that the American people understand and demand, both of us and the administration, that we get a clear picture of what the objectives are, what the cost is, and will be, because we have estimates, Professor Joseph Stiglitz has estimated the total cost of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, ultimately, of \$3 trillion.

But we need to understand what our goals are, what our objectives are, what the possibilities are, what the risks are, what the potential benefits are, and of course, what the costs are, because we're not playing with small numbers. We're not playing with insignificant lives. And this is the greatest challenge facing this country.

And I hope that we can have the type of dialogue, continuously, which focuses on these points, because the

American people, rightfully, are looking for leadership and progress on Iraq.

So once again, I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a great privilege to stand in the House and represent the freshman Democrats who came to Congress to change the direction of the country, who are, in many ways, changing the direction of the country. And I think we will continue to ask the questions that need to be asked, and try to bring a much quicker resolution in Iraq and a new direction for the American people.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and the balance of the week on account of a family health matter.

Mr. BUYER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of a death in the family.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. CUMMINGS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. POE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MCHENRY, for 5 minutes, today and April 10.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, April 16.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, April 16.

Mr. WESTMORELAND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCCOTTER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PENCE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CONAWAY, for 5 minutes, April 10.

(The following Member (at his request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BROWN of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The Speaker announced her signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 550. An act to preserve existing judge-ships on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 50 minutes

p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, April 10, 2008, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5924. A letter from the Chief, Programs and Legislation Division, Department of the Air Force, Department of Defense, transmitting Notice of the decision to conduct a standard competition of the Civil Engineer Function at Schriever Air Force Base, Colorado, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2461; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5925. A letter from the Chairman, Department of Defense, transmitting the 2008 report on vulnerability assessments for FY 2007 and military construction requirements for the FY 2007 to FY 2012 Future Years Defense Plan, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2859; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5926. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, Department of Defense, transmitting the Annual Report of the Activities of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation for 2007, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2166(i); to the Committee on Armed Services.

5927. A letter from the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting authorization of Colonel Norman J. Brozenick, Jr., United States Air Force, to wear the insignia of the grade of brigadier general in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5928. A letter from the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting letter on the approved retirement Admiral William J. Fallon, United States Navy, and his advancement to the grade of admiral on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5929. A letter from the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement Vice Admiral John G. Morgan, Jr., United States Navy, and his advancement to the grade of vice admiral on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5930. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General William E. Mortensen, United States Army, and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5931. A letter from the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting authorization of the enclosed list of officers to wear the insignia of the next higher grade in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5932. A letter from the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting notice of the intention to convert the combined commissary and exchange store at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida, to an independent Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) store; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5933. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of Defense, transmitting a copy of legislative proposals as part of